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EDITORIAL

On its first appearance as published by this firm in the Spring of 1940 the price of *Poetry Quarterly* was 1s 6d. That price was established on the printing costs of before the war. Today our printer's bill is over ten times what it was then. Recently we reduced the number of pages to keep the price the same, but costs rose again. With reluctance therefore we must raise our price to two shillings and reduce the number of pages again. It is of very little use pointing out how small this sum is and how little the increase. People are either short of money or they are not. They buy poetry magazines or they don't. We feel sure that those who really want *Poetry Quarterly* to continue publication will not grudge an extra two shillings a year.

With this issue the series of articles on the work of the more outstanding of the younger poets will come to an end. We are aware that Mr. Moore has been the subject of an earlier article but since that was published he has written a good deal, and there is room for a further assessment. In our next issues more space will be devoted to the prose poem, the poet's journal and any kind of intelligent experiment in the art of self expression which is not likely to find a place in commercial writing.

WREY GARDINER

Poem for George Fraser

My friend who was ripe in the arts of life
Has spoken to me through the impersonal
mechanism
Of the radio. I have heard a voice from the past,
I have remembered the accent of time.

Words are so very little in the battle
Of days and dreams, the wonder of thought,
Words lack so often the harmony of truth,
But here I heard the kindly accents of memory.

I pray with you George, for the bedevilled in hell.
The disheartening criminals of our world
Of lesser intelligences are the curtain
Of tears across the river-beds of hope.

We are all alone in the end, so why not
In the beginning. We cannot communicate
The chance feeling, the heart of dream,
We cannot love beyond the complicated theme.

This is not the last word I have to say
For a friend, nor the last fight
For the drifting hulk of truth across
The tricky surfaces of a windless lagoon.

There are those who take courses in Joyce and Eliot
In modern universities, and there are those
Who write still in the dull passage-ways of dead cities
Looking beyond the hospital bed, over the eternal
trees.

N. K. CRUICKSHANK

The Death of Nicholas Berdyaev

So you have left our realm of make-belief,
Berdyaev, eternity's lover.
This world of time that never was your home,
This life you put into inverted commas
And scorned as unreal, third-rate, second-hand.

If there are trials still, you speak their tongue.
What though long avenues of effort, sheer
Inspired ravines, mists, wrestling ascents,
Lie between you and freedom's perfect summer?
You have your element of the personal,
Your values sing, your step is unconstrained;
While some at least of the sought thrilling meanings
Have taken off their winter wraps of myth:
Surely for you the moments after death
Were free and light as a first spring-like day.

For you: for whom God was intoxication;
Who had a vison of the spirit's landscape
Stretching away from Him into a void,
Vain, vapid, boring, flat, parochial distance.
How should we count it matter for lament
That you have gone from us, have taken death's
Prodigious inward pace towards the fierce
Impassioning fountain of all interest?

And yet, this is lament. Now that demonic
Huge energies are shaking the cracked bulk
And concrete avalanche of necessity
Down on the smirched, the trespassed image of man,
It is terrible to think of you as dead,
Berdyaev, unwearying protester.

NICHOLAS MOORE

A God of the Morning

(For Fred Marnau)

Asking me to eject too many
Of the successful, familiar features,
Enter the Great Hobgoblin of two natures,
The seer and zany:

Enter and strut, and crow across the board,
And whisper among the swaying curtains,
So that my fate, alone of all fates, is certain,
As madly the wandering widow ascertains:
"The married shall be unmarried,
The unharried harried,
The bored bored;
The virtuous easy, the uneasy full of virtues."

And so, my friend, Agrihipolous,
No common god or omen,
Comes in the guise of the Great Woman
With a flick and a stagger of tongue,
Until I'm alone with Otto's numinous
And the little golden bells of the song unsung.

Then gladly, clap your hands
For the great big Charlie-monster who cometh,
    cometh,
As comes at last the unavailing dawn
When, after the cops and robbers of night have gone,
We see the starting flowers of summer, the summit
Of growth the ancient Guide demands.

Hubble-gubbling the Great Hobgoblin glubs
Among the glints and glibs.
And at every point in my two hearts
The dual prefect lives.

RONALD BOTTRALL

Letter to a Politician

It is with diffidence that I address you
Knowing how beset you are with trivialities of office:
Pestering letters from local postmen
Who ask that every delivery shall be the last,
Bun-faced babies held up to be kissed, an urgent
Summons to a half-empty, mouldering debate.
My excuse is that no voice has ever raised
Itself so often and so fervently in your praise
As mine, no back more bent, no mind more pliant
To your least inclination. To proffer my advice
Is as embarrassing to me as it is
To you to receive the deliberations of an,
At best, aesthetic intelligence.
It is a sort of defect in me to hesitate
In matters nearest to my heart when I can speak
With tropes and elegancies about the *frivola*
Of existence. What I am trying to bring
To your august attention is the lamentable state
Of the Arts. When there were Reviews it was
Always possible to butter the reviewers. When
There were patrons one could get a commission
At the cost of a little sycophancy, which was more
Than compensated for by the excellence
Of the Sole Marguéry and the Hermitage. I would
joyfully
Agree to serve as a chauffeur or footman
If there happened to be a country squire disposed
(Like Mr. Boffin) to welcome a literary man
As a privileged companion or licensed buffoon,
But it sadly looks as if I must rely
On your access to a sinecure: something not too
Strenuous, but gleaming with the *panache*
That admits to high places and the seats of the mighty.
I am perfectly prepared to change my name
From Finklestein to Montgomery if that will lead to
A column in the Sunday papers, but this
Alone is not sufficient. Something with a vaguely

Diplomatic flavour is what I am after,
Something carrying an *entrée* to foreign embassies
And guaranteeing a lunch with at least
The Head of Chancery or the Consul-General
When one travels abroad. You may object
That the time is not ripe for patronage not far
Removed from nepotism, but surely
The creative artist is not unworthy of his hire?
Why should I spin from my entrails with pain?

Your soft pace to the hustings and tacit assumption
Of God-given superiority are not
(If I may be permitted to say so) altogether
unpremeditated.
Let us look around at this great Wen, this city
Celebrated in rhyme, in marble, in harmonies, over
The millennia. It bursts like a cancerous rose
Into railway sidings, mortuaries, prisons, tenements,
And all the proliferation of a garbage heap.
We artists are the flowers of evil. You politicians
Are the artificers. You walk open-eyed
Into the trap of responsibility and the trappings
Of power, you assume the specious mantle
Of corruption and do not hesitate to direct the fortunes
And health of a herded and stampeded people.
Your subterfuges and prevarications double and
redouble
Turn and twist into the Pripet Marshes
Of hesitation and duplicity. No answer but can be
Read backwards, no riposte but rebounds upon
Itself, no assurance that does not immediately
Go underground like a stream in limestone
To re-appear in quite another context. Your every
action
Is calculated to catch the public fancy ,
Your very gestures at the dispatch-box are elegant
gloves
Covering the leprosy of your minds,
Your face-saving is as profitable as a piece of mildewed
cheese.
Cheese-mites, ticks on the body politic, hook-worms
In the feet of the poor, what have you to say to me

who am
Only a louse on the locks of literature?
If by indirections you were arriving at equity or even
At approximations to a less regimented
Form of inequality, a case might be made out
For your continued existence. Instead
You multiply Bills, quadruple Orders, spawn Directives
And overpopulate the bureaucracy.
As a sop to us you set up prizes for poets, pre-judged
(If not rigged) by a select Committee
Of bishops and entrepreneurs of culture reliably
Conformist and fashionably safe enough
To reject the original and plump for the *chic*.
Why not be frank and openly instruct us
To hawk our nicely-rounded buttocks to the highest
bidder?

Sir, how can you forgive the impertinence
Of my runaway tongue, the author of all my evils?
We writers are the victims of words
And our own accursed facility. How could I be so base
As to address a potential benefactor
Thus grossly? Only pardon me and I will submit
Tomorrow an ode on your generosity
Which I have arranged beforehand to have printed
On the leader page of the *Daily Clarion*.
Place your foot upon my neck, spit in my face;
Peccavi! In hope and fear I await
Your benefice, the outpouring of your magnanimity.

JOHN HEATH-STUBBS

Song for Closing Time

Last night as they closed the bars and cafés
I thought I heard the poet Hafiz
Sing drunken-sweet as a speckled mavis.
"All things are passing; the stars grow dim."

At the hour when conversations get coarser
I noticed the ghost of Geoffrey Chaucer
Gazing up at the inverted saucer:
"All things are passing; the stars grow dim."

When I was depressed on account of the slump
I met Leopardi caressing his hump
Who said, in the midst of his dismal dump,
"All things are passing; the stars grow dim."

As I strode on, elated by Bacchus,
I ran into Quintus Horatius Flaccus,
With words as brilliant as Christmas crackers:
"All things are passing; the stars grow dim."

When late at night I was walking home
I encountered St. John Chrysostom
Who remarked, with patriarchal aplomb,
"All things are passing; the stars grow dim."

THOMAS GOOD

Meditation in Sickness

Darkness is falling where holy feet once travelled
Calling a brief armistice with oblivion,
As sinks the death-like glory of a sky
Familiar to the scriptural eye.

Four stars have guarded my pillow
Four stars have witnessed my pain,
Where droops the pregnant jasmine on the ground.
Dismissing Venus' apparition on the walls
The wraith which taints the present and appals.

Hear us o night and hear us o avengers,
The nameless furies of the dark or angels of the dawn.
The cynic and the vampire, I accuse,
The demon in myself, the woman, priest,
The catamite and politician.
Here the spleen passes, with the vigil,

A last limb of the sun lights on the cross,
Eliminating all that's known
To the mere shadow of a bone,
Disarms the prick of fever and the purge of pain,
Relieves renunciation, like the saint in joy;
"Leave but my harp" he told,
For the rest grows old.

England awoke me with the redbreast and the willow,
England's spring glory in the drowsy vale of Trent,
In convalescence coveting the universal span,
A poet's intuition of the heart of man.

LEBANON 19.1.52

TOM SCOTT

The Song of Sicily

How long since, vined and scarred I rose,
  Aphrodite from the seas,
No hall no tale nor song retains.

Dionysos broke my sleep.
  Through my veins his currents dance.
Grapes are the tragic tears I weep.

And still the goat upon me prance.
Beside Pergusa I have seen
  Hell on Proserpine advance,

There on the honeyed Enna plain
  Heard Ceres for her daughter moan.
Trapped in fecundity, I have been

Dishonoured, and dishonour shown.
Charybdis, Scylla, guard my shore
  Where weird Morgana walks alone.

Where Milazzo is, of yore
  The eldest bard has sung Mylae.
In Etna, Cyclope forges roar.

Out of the ground in Siracusa
  Springs from that fierce god pursues her,
Nymph in a panic, Arethusa.

Men from the Islands came this way,
  Lured by my fertility.
I was no chaste Penelope.

They loved me all their golden years.
  Theirs are the temples grace my brows;
Whose scales were rung with marble tiers.

Then the imperious Eagle came
  And drove the reaping lovers home,
Banished the father of my son,

And ravished what belonged to him.
  He and I were bested then
By Berber, Spaniard and Norman.

But once my son himself rebelled,
  Once only my defiler died.
O Procida, how lost thy bride!

O thou Palermo, his adored town,
  Keep well your memory of Vespers
Whisper still the name of John!

Trinacria, Trinacria,
  Hybrid of oranges and stone,
Bare—and baring; barren—and a barn;

Loom in Mediterranean lume
  And light with dark its gloom.
Reveal thy goddess's Promethean doom.

For confess that I, the corn mother,
  Rule, not time, this land and litter,
And here o no healing river.

Rouse from dream in a cross-crist shade.
  The shade of a dead Da Procida.
Uncage the lark in Girgentian glade.

Poseidon, god gone grey with foam,
  Return to us our wanderer,
Bring hero, husband, father, home.

Go, seek him out, Sicilian son,
  Tell him the threshold stone is worn ,
My womb seeds epochs aching to be born.

Tell him I pine in the gathering web,
  That the priest has filched my image and fame,
Jacobed my son with a cuckoo christ.

But say, say, when you greet your sire,
  That for him for always alone I long,
Till the last spring breed my final fall.

O temples of Girgenti, stand
  Harplike in the ageless wind;
In a windless age, aeolian.

Enna, and Calascibetta, glance
  Down from mediaeval heights
Upon this flowering wilderness.

What is your silence listening for?
  The echo of a rusty spur?
I sing to ears no longer here.

But electric tunny in Trapani current,
  The yellow pearl of Empedocles' port,
Timeless messages intimate.

The tree still lives though the leaves are gone.
  When the flesh melts, remains the bone,
The earth abides, thought the bard moves on.

And from them other years shall spring,
  The bones rise up round ardent lung,
The hushed earth thunder into song.

O ghouls of power, vampires of gain,
  Should you destroy Schweitzer, Einstein,
Our four dreams will myth it again,

Myth all again, all knowledge won
  By our cursed kind. All, shall spin
From sea and sky, from earth and sun.

Then may this land whom too much grief
    encumbers
  Fan that fire which now indeed but smoulders
Here, where time burns back about eternal embers.

SYDNEY TREMAYNE

The Back End of a Horse

Through my window I see the back end of a horse,
Red centre of green landscape. As for verse,
The outlook is unpromising. Rain falls.
The by-road's porridge pitted with spoonholes
Slops down the hill towards the tousled trees.
The rust-roofed roosting boxes where we house
Emit their Sunday spirals. Through the wall
Neighbourly radio is driving hell.
Concentrate, concentrate, concentrate on the horse.
The back end of the horse is like a purse
Plump with the possibility of exchange.
Will it be heads or tails? A mental lunge
Swaps back for front. We're off. Dartmoor it is.
Dark moors sweep undulating into space.
The wind blows on the moor. It always does.
The anvil-headed stallion's fed-up face
Glowers to the wind. He has not budged for hours,
His ears tipped back towards his ragged mares,
And through his head and in between his eyes
There goes the wind that blows and blows and blows
And blows to me the old reporter Quinn
At the street corner of his market town
Waiting for news to happen, direful news
Out of the wind that blows and blows and blows
With a high whining through his keyhole eyes,
Old Quinn who is not there, Quinn the recluse,
A coat hung on the handle of a hod,
A bowler-hatted death's head who has stood
Till green as an old gravestone by the Bank.
What likelier place can be to stand and think,
All hunched up like a heron? In his step
Some old affliction put a jaunty skip
So that he mocked himself about the town.
He danced his death for years. The dance is done.
(I have moved half a kingdom from the horse
And half a lifetime also, which is worse.)
The ghost of Quinn calls up his rival Towse,

Prefixed The Shy for reasons no one knows.
His whiskers bristle and his voice is bass,
His height is sixty inches, more or less,
His feet and his umbrella spurn the ground.
It was a steed that brought him to my mind.
Behind him troop the various characters:
The man who was engaged for twenty years
(Engaged to wed, I mean) takes pride of place;
The urban councillors, the Bench, the police,
The candidate with marvellous trousers-crease
Sharper by far—but that is obvious;
The spry solicitors, the drama queen,
The men with waistcoat pockets full of corn,
The fire brigade, the bowling club, the band
"Rendering rousing marches"—how they rend!
With all divisions of the local strife
Jealously represented, I tick off
The Church of England, Roman Catholics,
Three sorts of Methodists and at their backs
Salvationists and Unitarians,
The Women's Institute and the Rotarians.
While windfall bells are scattered like confetti
They all join hands and dance as though gone dotty.
But then the wind that blows and always blows
Snuffs out the music of the shuffling shoes.
Old Quinn snaps shut his notebook and looks up.
And all look up; the whirling dancers stop;
A flower of many faces opens wide.
The rain spears from the sky and strikes them dead.
As one by one they fall, and falling fade;
The centre of the landscape turns to red.
Is not this tale a strange one to rehearse
Through gazing on the back end of a horse?

NICHOLAS MOORE: A PROBLEM POET

SEVERAL hundreds of people are writing poetry in English today, and quite a lot of it is published. The most characteristic feature of it is exactly what one would expect when poetry goes into mass production—it is all very dull. Whole slabs of it are a dreary synthetic mixture which might all have been produced by one anonymous person. This is exactly why the later work of Nicholas Moore is so important—nobody else could possibly have written it (I can hear this remark greeted with cries of "Thank God" from opposition benches). This also explains why so many people object to it.

Much of his earlier poetry was rubber stamped with the usual ideas and mannerisms of the late '30's and the years of the war; but even then it was different. It caught what Moore called "The pointed, flavoured truth of the jazz world". Even though he was looking at most things head on he was in the senior class for perspective drawing. Much of his work had the conventional political earnestness of the time and the bright light still shone from Lenin's tomb. On the whole his political poems have not lasted well—his feeling for democracy never seems to ring entirely true, no doubt because as a young intellectual he was looking at the people of Europe and Russia as symbols and not as men. The Americans, on the other hand, were always alive to him through jazz, through "little-man-ness":

> *"The plain man of America is never recognised.*
> *He is an unknown Cootie blowing a trumpet,*
> *Or a little man sent to clink as an agitator,*
> *A black-and-white traitor to the cause of profit.*
> *For him I write this poem, for his heart is with us."*

The difference about his poetry, even in these early days, was in its easy technical accomplishment, its use of singing refrains (the jazz world again) and its unexpected and unexplained lightness.

By the end of the war he could write in any form he wanted, "The Ode to Sexual Beauty" with its carefully worked seven line stanzas, and at the same time the "Acrobats in a Red Spotlight", a sonnet sequence. The style of this sequence was to determine the next several years of his writing, and with some modifications he uses it still. The people in his poems by now are not merely symbols any more—they are real people, individualists

and anarchists, with odd names and odder habits—Mr. Appleplax or Mr. Ullubux, all strange manifestations of Moore's own personality and of the people he saw about him. The romantic more earnest-sounding Moore went into eclipse and the acrid, amused and depressed Moore held the field on his own for some years. His unpopularity can safely be said to date from this time. What can you do with a poet who writes:

> *"There is a woman who sits beside the shore*
> *Alone: a dolorous woman in a dolorous*
> *Landscape. She is alone and fat."*

We do not expect her to be fat. Moore is a breaker of spells, a smasher of atmospheres. He has climbed on to a new level of supercilious, painfully cynical behaviour. This poetry is for the highly educated, not because it is full of academic background—it has in fact very little—but because of its dry, distant, sometimes over-subtle atittude. It has nothing to offer to the straightforward emotional, or to the half-educated snobs; it is a matter of fine balance, and whenever a poem does not come off it is a most dismal failure. Sometimes one just cannot see what he is trying to say, or why he has chosen this particular way of putting it.

But provided I can occasionally read something like the "Three Poems for Mr. Eliot's Sixtieth Birthday" I am prepared to forgive quite a lot:

> *"I met Mr. Eliot by the salty river*
> *And it seemed as if he were going on for ever.*
> *I raised my hat to him, he his to me,*
> *And both of us looked towards the wintry sea."*

Forgiveness, of course, is a sentimentality quite out of place in any assessment of Nicholas Moore's work. He is completely and almost inhumanly uncompromising, and in the "Recollections of the Gala" published in 1950, these qualities stand out more than any other. This is, I think, an important book which did not receive anything like the attention it deserved. His attitude throughout is ambivalent, he does not draw anything from the front or side any more, but from all angles at once, and invariably from two opposing sides. His sweet-and-sour flavour makes a real impact in poems such as "Song":

"O, my dear, you are lovely as wine,
And, wherever you dance or you dine,
There's just one thing that's certain:

You will never evade the shadow
In any dark room or bright-eyed meadow.
You'll never be careless again.

The disease will begin to ride like a fever,
Unless you remain yourself. O, the clever
Only bring pain.

It's no use, it's no use, it's no use forever.
You can't be good, if you're going to be clever.
The shadow alone will remain."

"Alcestis in Ely" and "Variation on an Old Theme" are both most moving poems, although some readers might find too much self-pity about them.

The romantic quality of "An Echo from an Athenian Night" proves that Moore has not lost his old lyrical power, and there is another sonnet sequence "Mr Defresco's Thoughts by Day and Night" which expresses the same ambivalence which dogs him through all his work:

"Yet I remain bound to one constant pole:
O Intellectual Beauty! O Sensual Soul!"

Since the publication of this book Moore has not written very much, a change from his high output when he was younger. Although he has still kept some of his more irritating mannerisms, the spill-over words and lines, the only half-funny obscurity and untidiness, each poem he writes now is more considered and moves more slowly. He has evolved much more and much more quickly than most of our poets. His politics also move with the times. Since the end of the war his work expresses complete disillusionment with the world, but in "Dr. Inferticle at an Academy Address" there is a new undercurrent:

"This is in the nature of the European.
There is only one, and that not an easy solution—
To remain attached to oneself. The Pythagorean
Sense of proportion will then befit each nation."

The following and final stanza of this poem again expresses a lot of what he wants to say: like Jacques Prévert, he thinks of the perfection of birds:

> *"And, to return again to the image of the bird—*
> *It is that bird we must above all admire.*
> *Its straight flight, its feathery wings, its hard*
> *Direction, its aiming always and ever higher."*

When Moore began writing he was more or less one of a group; now he is in complete isolation because his work is not easy to understand. Much of it looks very superficial because the words printed on the paper have a straight forward meaning of their own, but, as previous critics have remarked, they leave almost too much unsaid. He is a truly individual figure in a monotonous landscape, and it would be heartening to find him as much appreciated here as he is in the States. No poet with his perception, intelligence and accomplishment deserves to be neglected.

MARGARET CROSLAND

THE STRANGE CASE OF GEORGE PAINTER

LITERATURE, like the noble art of drinking, has its four-, three-, two-, and single-bottle men. Sometimes these last are chiefly known as critics (wine-tasters rather than drinkers, one may call them) as in the case of Sainte-Beuve and Constant, with their solitary novels *Volupté* and *Adolphe*. In our own day we have had Herbert Read who apart from his poems* which have appeared like infrequent shapely icicles, has expressed himself fully and creatively once only in his rare and original story *The Green Child*.

To class George Painter—better known as the sparkling reviewer of novels in the *Listener*, and author of a much praised work on Gide—with these celebrated names is not to propound improper comparisons. It is merely to suggest he may best be understood when considered, along with them, as a one-bottle man; the vintage of which we are invited to acknowledge in his book of poems *The Road to Sinodun*.** Before I remark on its bitter bouquet, its nostalgic but independent body, I will

* Sainte-Beuve's poems call for no comment ** Rupert Hart-Davies 6s.

ask the reader's leave to insert a digression which may prove, I hope, not quite beside the point.

In the khaki winter of 1942 I was billeted in Blundellsands, just outside Liverpool. No. 6 Coy., N.C.C. (of which we were mostly unwilling members) contained a fair proportion of talent and no small percentage of eccentricity. Among representatives of the first element were Christopher Fry and Wynyard Browne, the actors Michael Gough and Gordon Whiting, and the poets John Bate and George Moor. Painter's entry into this group was felt to bridge the gulf between 'brains' and pure weirdness, for George was in some ways the weirdest of the lot. In appearance he seemed to prefigure the character of Steerpike in Mervyn Peak's novel *Titus Groan*—an agonised Victorian-Gothic idealist—the problem-portrait of a 'difficult' young man. Not that George was difficult to others (though his powers of exasperating, when unfairly provoked, were of a truly formidable nature); no, the difficulty was something reserved for himself. Between his intuitive concept of self and his past experience there existed no agreement. Life had seemed bent on impressing him with the falsity of the outside world—the inconstancy of friends and the bad faith of love. Subjective awareness, on the other hand, had led him to believe that in himself there lay a seed of truth if he could reach to it. (George, at that time, was discovering Kierkegaard and must have been enheartened to read that "truth is in subjectivity".)

Like many young men in the years before conscription, George had lived on the crumbling cliff-edge of hedonism, and found it impossible to reconcile his appetite for life with his instinctive aspiration.The result was a series of unhappy love-affairs which provided the basic substance for his poems, and left him when he entered the Forces in a most uncomfortable state of mind. By this time he had actually written *The Road to Sinodun* which in one sense, provided the answer to what he was seeking; namely, the resolve (as David Gascoyne puts it) to "persevere in thine identity"; but what the individual *qua* poet apprehends as a spontaneous truth may take the individual *qua* person several years to recognise or accept. So when George first came to us he was in a bad way. Besides the poems, he carried with him a manuscript diary which told the tale of progressive disappointment in a more literal fashion. This chronicle of private disillusion had been praised, he told me, for its attempted veracity by one of the ladies responsible for it—an admission by 'enemy

intelligence' which seemed to afford him certain consloation.

George, at that period, was much preoccupied with the life and work of Rimbaud; and entertained, like the French poet, the notion of poetry as a source of power. Just how really magical he imagined its effects to be I never discovered; but remember him telling us that he was searching to find the word which would detonate the world. Very naive as I was in those days, I replied that I hoped he was speaking metaphorically. George, I recall, did not enlighten us; and, indeed, it is probably better for most poets not to know quite in what sense their words are to be taken.

The Road to Sinodun is described by the poet as "a winter and summer monodrama", and consists of two-and-sixty pieces arranged in six sections. Although these poems are to be regarded as an introspective record of events they cannot strictly be said to form a narrative or sequence with beginning, middle, and end. Themes are stated, dropped, and reassumed; and though one feels that a kind of spiritual distance has been traversed between the first and the last poem, it would prove impossible to trace anything like a consistent-moving graph.

The classical exemplars for this mode of composition can be found, I suppose, in Heine's *Book of Songs* and Housman's *Shropshire Lad*. Painter, I feel, is nearer to the German, where the myth is developed in subjective terms, though there is a greater unity of matter in Painter's book than in the other two.

Besides having something of a structure in common, Painter shares with these two poets further elements I shall now consider: with Heine, a certain grisly eldritch fancy; and with Housman, an acid terseness of wit. Compare for example, Heine's Preface in verse to the third edition of his *Book of Songs*, where he pictures love as a Sphinx—whose fascination the poet can't resist and whose embraces are as destructive as they are sweet, with a poem by Painter from his sequence *Meetings with a Double*:

"If you light on a gallows it bodes nothing but good,
Unless you're in the middle of a dark winter wood.

But you are in a wood? Well, there's nothing to fear,
Except if there's a long silken noose hanging near.

And there is such a noose? You're in danger, it's plain,
Unless a previous occupant warns you back again.

What, nobody has hanged himself here before?
Then you won't come out of this glade any more.

All my omens you've slighted and it's done you no good,
But you may as well know me, so I'll lift my hood."

Whilst preserving the First-Person-Singular approach, both poets, here, have succeeded in expressing their fear, foreboding and death-wish in a neat, fore-shortened, yet self-contained myth. Both poets, too, seem to gloat over involving or punishing their own image. "But you may as well know me, so I'll lift my hood" threatens the stranger in Painter's poem, whilst in Heine's *Dream Pictures* the devilish black Kobolds come to seize the poet from the arms of his love.

The likeness to Housman is easy to show. " "Is my friend hearty" " asks the Shropshire Lad,

" "Now I am thin and pine,
And has he found to sleep in
A better bed than mine?"

promptly to receive the answer,

"Yes, lad, I lie easy,
I lie as lads would choose;
I cheer a dead man's sweetheart,
Never ask me whose"

while Painter tells the following ironic anecdote:

"One night as I my darling clipped,
A light foot by the doorway skipped,
And scratched and tapped to come within:
I opened, and a rat ran in.

' 'Tis true, the rat trap's through this door,'
Said I, 'but there's no room for more.'
Yet the creature would not rest
Till locked inside my darling's breast."

There is also another type of wit in Painter; wit of a heavier calibre, the *saeva indignatio* of Swift and Catullus—misogynistic and at the same time sexual. Indeed, Painter seems to have felt for all the ladies so mordantly celebrated in his book the *"Odi et amo"* of the Roman poet. "I too have loved a bitch", he writes in a sardonic lyric on page 18.

The Road to Sinodun can be described as a diary of the weaning of love, of the ego's dependence upon another until it is deprived of that support and begins to discover its own secret strength. The title of the book is taken from the name of a "curious domed hill, with a beechwood on its summit, rising from the south bank of the Thames opposite Dorchester. It is a landmark for many miles up and down the stream, and is visible from the Sun Inn, Benson." In this Inn the poet and his love spent a part of one summer together; and right to the end of this poem-cycle Sinodun haunts him like a symbol. In the penultimate poem he renounces his obsession with it—

"Sinodun is far behind"

—only to admit its rejection from his thoughts leaves him more lost and lonely than ever. This negative knowledge appears to mark a necessary stage in his progress; and in the last poem he announces he has conquered the fear of time and death.

Painter's daemon in his *Road to Sinodun* is not that Muse who is the death of adolescence. His poem is very much a young man's poem, and as such has its own special value. The reason for this is that early manhood finds itself wracked by a diversity of inner troubles it cannot explain. Generally, to be able to do so is the proof that they have been transcended and that in a certain psychological sense one is no longer 'a young man'. The originality of Painter's poems consists in the fact that he has been able to endure and explain his sufferings, to analyse these early seasonal vicissitudes while actually experiencing them. Regarded in this light, the poem has something in common with Mr. Connolly's early novel *The Rock Pool*. The hero of this work, the young man Edgar Naylor, certainly shares with the poet (as he appears in print) a sense of his own insufficiency and a feeling that his fellow-men do not like him. In Edgar Naylor's case this is not surprising since his creator makes him a nasty piece of work. The young poet in *The Road to Sinodun* does not merit this self-aversion, and in this failure to depict cause and effect in truer proportions Painter's work is the less mature. Nor is his

poem by any means free of the tendency to over-compensation which talented 'inferiority' finds itself prone to; though Painter is not entirely in the dark about this mental process either, and in one of his poems writes how "The proud have inherited hell".

But if Mr. Connolly's work is a superior record to Painter's in the accuracy of its 'low-down', it lacks the note of aspiration which sounds so constantly through the poem. Both the young poet and Edgar Naylor begin with being the proud possessors of a well-developed *nostalgie de boue,* but whereas the latter ends up by still wallowing in his sty, the former concludes by turning his back upon the trough in the search of less salacious nourishment. Painter's, then, is a work of real inwardness—a fable of the growing-pains of individuality.

If, the language and music of this poem are not of themselves of a novel order, they possess none the less an elegant directness and a lyrical quality which though reminiscent of other poets is smooth and pleasing. Sometimes, too, a kind of gnomic persistence gives to a poem a freshness of its own;

"Beetle of eternity,
The pin of time is stuck through me.
They who push the iron in
Know not I can digest the pin.

Hard their shaft with rage and fear.
Harder my guts than any spear.
My infinity will last
When their pin has turned to rust."

But the newness inherent in *The Road to Sinodun* can only be properly appreciated if the poem is read and regarded as a whole. In it—with an absence of obscurity most unusual in contemporary verse—we find a lucid personal myth; a private legend which is also a microcosm embodying a state of consciousness through which most of us have passed.

DEREK STANFORD

THE REAL THING

Poems and Satires 1951 by ROBERT GRAVES (Cassell, 7s. 6d.)
The Age of the Dragon: Poems 1930-1951 by JOHN LEHMANN (Longmans, 12s. 6d.)

THE appearance of a new book of poems by a master hand, coincident with that of an ambitious Collected Edition by a lesser poet, provokes reflection upon the character of the essential poetic qualities. "A volume of collected poems," writes Robert Graves in his foreword, "should form a sequence of the intenser moments of the poet's spiritual autobiography, moments for which prose is insufficient." This presupposes that the cardinal requirement for poetic accomplishment is an utterly first-hand confrontation of experience, on the one hand, and of language, on the other. By this test Graves' work is, without doubt, the genuine article; from first to last, and with all its permutations of subject, mood and style, it has essential continuity. Tender, sagacious, sarcastic, melancholy-jocular, by turns clownish and profound, this poet discloses the unmistakeable geography of an authentic spiritual world.

In comparison, Mr. Lehmann is, at most, an honourable failure. And this is, finally, because his poetic personality is vaguer, weaker, more generalized: he is first-hand neither in relation to experience nor to language. The poems certainly have some unity of mood and idea, but reading through them one becomes aware that they define a situation rather than create a world—and of a type rather than an individual. That situation is ostensibly that of a cultured and leisured man of the upper middle class, who vacillates emotionally between the values of genteel, Country House society and the "outer" world of wars, journeys and revolutions which threatens its continuance. Thus the poems fall roughly into two main groups, those dominated by the symbols Garden, Room and House on the one side (*e.g.* "A Garden Revisited", "A Room with a View", "There is a House") and those dominated by the ideas of journeyings and politics on the other ("Travel Bureau", "War", "Bombardment", "In a London Terminus.") Indeed, the last and longest piece in the book, the Eclogue for the Air entitled "The House", is openly concerned with precisely this theme. Now this merely accidental and temporary predicament, being a social rather than a personal one, is not a proper subject for poetry. What *is* a proper subject for

poetry is the much deeper psychical situation which it tangentially and imperfectly reflects, in which the static maternal-feminine symbols of House, Garden and Room are counterposed by the masculine-historical ideas of movement, change and progress. It is because this deeper level is never truly recognised and penetrated, experienced and articulated—because Mr. Lehmann exists too readily on the second-hand plane of society, shall we say, rather than on the first-hand plane of personality—that these poems remain flat and shadowy. (Of especial interest for this interpretation, incidentally, is "The Nightmare", where the fair House becomes "that secret base of souls who'd lost their way.") How derivative these poems are will best be shown by quotation:

> *When I was young the story went not so:*
> *The hill was lofty, man toiled up and on,*
> *And if the snares were subtly laid, were not*
> *The culprits plain? Could justice not be done?*
> ("Poems for Two Voices")

> *Millions have trusted what the legends tell:*
> The dead live on, their spirits freed from cares
> Beyond our time and skies their praises sing
> Throned in pure light or deep in asphodel;
> *But never witness has returned, who bears*
> *One trophy blossom from that deathless spring.*
> *One sublime phrase of those Elysian airs.*
> ("Elegy")

Shades of Lord Tennyson and Sir William Watson! It is curious that writing of this sort should still be possible; it *wouldn't* be possible if Mr. Lehmann were a little more alive and alert, both to himself and his world, and to language. Compare the pompous, yet flaccid uniformity of rhythm here with Graves's vigorous and idiosyncratic handling of it; the stale, unconsidered sentiments with Graves's pithy reflections; the faded imagery with the elder poet's sharp-eyed immediacy of observation in—for instance—"Your Private Way":

> *Whether it was your way of walking*
> *Or of laughing moved me,*
> *At sight of you a song wavered*
> *Ghostly on my lips; I could not voice it,*
> *Uncertain what the notes or key.*

Be thankful I am no musician,
Sweet Anonymity, to madden you
With your own private walking-laughing way
Imitated on a beggar's fiddle
Or blared across the square on All Fools' Day.

This comparison is perhaps not quite fair to Mr. Lehmann, who has some good lines, like—

The winter sun behind the orchard trees
Has drawn blue shadows on the diamond snow,

and

Yet there behind the sealing doors
Deep curtained halls and galleries wait,
And paintings on the sunless walls
Are hung, for none to contemplate,

—and who, in one poem, "Invocation", comes very nearly alive as a poet. Reading his book I was reminded, not only of Tennyson and Watson and Rupert Brooke, but more especially of Harold Monro: the earlier and now forgotten Monro, I mean, of *Before Dawn*, before he had come face to face with life and made himself into the genuine poet he afterwards was. It is not impossible that existence may effect such a transformation in Mr. Lehmann—if he is willing to pay the price.

D. S. SAVAGE

NONE TOO DEFT

Nones by W. H. AUDEN (Faber & Faber, 10s. 6d.)

AUDEN'S new book starts with a sort of apologia which is very relevant to any consideration of the poems in the book itself, which do in a way require an apology or at least an explanation, which the dedicatory poem very effectively gives; for a lot of the shine and high spirits have gone out of Auden's recent writing, if you compare it with the brilliance of the past. But, whether as a matter of policy or of needs-must, it is clear that he could no longer

" . . . . . in the grand old manner
Have sung from a resonant heart"

His reasons and apology are, I think, worth quoting in some fulness for the light they shed on the subsequent poems, and indeed on most of his later work. He has spoken of the past when, among the wise and good, one could be witty and gay, and enjoy oneself; he goes on:

"But, pawed-at and gossiped-over
By the promiscuous crowd,
All words like peace and love,
All sane affirmative speech,
Had been soiled, profaned, debased
To a horrid mechanical screech:
No civil style survived
That pandemonium
But the wry, the sotto-voce,
Ironic and monochrome:
And where should we find shelter
For joy or mere content
When little was left standing
But the suburb of dissent."

This introductory poem does in fact contain more of the old Auden manner than most of the poems in the book; his earlier poems, and most of his best poems, were in fact full of "words like peace and love" and were "All sane affirmative speech", and his new poems are indeed mostly sotto-voce and monochrome, whether one likes it or not. And even the wryness and irony, though they are there, are there sadly rather than gaily and wittily as when "We, too, had known golden hours". Auden's golden hours are over; whether he will in any way recover them remains to be seen.

There are poems in this volume of the old characteristic tone, the song "Deftly, admiral, cast your fly", with its splendid second verse, in which

"The Outer Provinces are lost,
Unshaven horsemen swill
The great wines of the Chateaux
Where you danced long ago."

and the sprightly and horrifying "Cattivo Tempo". But, even in these the figures of doom do not have quite the same witching power that they had on their first appearances as "The Two" in "The Witnesses". The Furies who

"At the appointed place
With claw and dreadful brow
Wait for them now."

seem somehow far less menacing than the original two, and their sinister universality:

"We've been watching you over the garden wall
For hours:
The sky is darkening like a stain;
Something is going to fall like rain,
And it won't be flowers."

But then Auden's weakness was always original sin— a deflating philosophy—and these sinister Fates have lost their power and much of their horror, because they have been emasculated by the shedding of their political and human overtones; they are now mere Furies, in traditional apparel, with the orthodox "claw and dreadful brow"; and no longer

" . . . . . with sudden swift emergence
Come the hooded women, the hump-backed surgeons,
And the Scissor Man."

I am reminded of the savage satire on the words of the traditional song "Careless Love", which becomes "Loveless Love", and a fine commentary on the synthetic values of the United States, and indeed of all the nations and peoples united under the great banners of the Hollywood crusade:

"From milkless milk
And silkless silk,
We are growing used to soul-less soul."

Auden was a poet whose nose was very close to the ground. He made his own myths, and they were what myths should be, because they were related to, and interacted with the life of his time. And now, I fear, we are getting a somewhat Audenless Auden, and a mythless myth. This kind of emasculation, at any rate, provides some grounds for such a fear. We're expected to put up with falsies. But it's surprising to find Auden expecting us to.

A symptom of this was the fatuous and humourless titles with which Auden gifted his title-less earlier works in his Collected Poems; it may have shown his contempt for them, but there is

nothing in this new book to compare with them. That is not to say that there are not some excellent poems, and a great many interesting patches in others: the conclusion of the remarkable "In Praise of Limestone", the lunatic and Chas. Addams-like "Nursery Rhyme", the delirious and formal "The Duet", which is faintly reminiscent of Lord Lobcock, Count Asthma and the six beggared cripples, and, above all, the descriptive and very Horatian "Ischia";—all these are at least something to be grateful for. And it is fitting, too, to praise Auden's persistent seriousness of purpose and assurance of technique at a time when so much is let slip. At least he doesn't—as so many of his contemporaries have done—play to the crowd. It is only a pity that his present verse does not show his old colour and disdainful command.

But it is altogether a sad time; with the harsh Grigson of yesteryear lost in a romantic fog among the minutely observed flora of our great country houses, with Auden writing in monochrome in the American suburbs and provinces, and most of our other best poets working hand-in-glove with the poetasters who make a living out of the flatulent and turgid writing which is considered suitable for the radio, and which, for all I know, is.

How we could do still with a civil style and some sane affirmative speech! But it is apparently becoming increasingly difficult for our better poets to give us this. Perhaps it is the times, perhaps it is failure of nerve, perhaps it is because too few of us care, but, however it may be,—to quote Auden's nursery rhyme—"The key that opens is the key that rusts".

NICHOLAS MOORE

The Editor,
Poetry Quarterly,
Sir,

The article on the poetry of Roy Campbell in your Autumn (1951) issue has only recently come to my attention. As Mr. Sergeant singles out for especial praise the poem "The Zulu Girl", your readers should perhaps be apprised of an article in *The Kenyon Review* for Winter (1942) by Justin O'Brien, one of the most important authorities on contemporary French literature and the sensitive and faithful translator of Gide's *Journal.* This article, entitled "Poet on Horseback", demonstrates Campbell's large borrowings from the French originals; it reminds us that, whilst Campbell inveighs against imitative poets, he has had the candour to confess, in *Broken Record,* that "my memory and imagination work as one" and, when writing of Californian and New Mexican poets, to allude to "a few good images which I pocketed and put to better use."

Professor O'Brien's article suggests to me that Campbell has dishonestly transposed certain French poems, and in particular vivid images from "Aurore" and "Palme" of Valéry. He has, it seems, also banalized and doggerelized many other beautiful French poems. Professor O'Brien concludes, "it is about time Mr. Campbell got down off his horse—the forequarters of which, at least, do not belong to him."

I have not had the time myself, nor, I confess after reading this illuminating article, the inclination, to explore Campbell's indebtedness to French models in detail, but it would seem to be heavy. "The Zulu Girl" relies on Rimbaud's "Chercheuses de Poux" and Baudelaire's "La Géante" for those effects which Mr. Sergeant so admires. Any reader can immediately substantiate such by comparison of the texts. Further enlightening comments on Mr. Campbell's work can be found in another publication which has not yet reached England, W. Y. Tindall's *Forces in Modern British Literature, 1885-1946* (New York, Alfred Knopf.).

Sincerely,
GEOFFREY WAGNER